WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

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## ANNUAL MEETING - June 22, 1957 - PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Time has a habit of slipping away rapidly, and when we check back we wonder how we could have kept so busy and accomplished so little. However, there are a few outstanding events during this past year which are worthy of note.

On Sept. 22, 1956 we had a picnic at the home of our Vice-president from Dexter, Mr. Leo Hoey, and none of us will ever forget the thrill of riding to Gordon Hall on the tally-ho or hay racks. Judge Breakey there invited our Society to take part in the parade preceding the dedication of the new County Bldg. People are still talking of the impressive sight we made in our old-fashioned costumes atop the tally-ho driven by Mr. Hoey accompanied by "Dr. Arksey." We have pictures of these events which are preserved in our files.

A number of our meetings have been held in the Rackham Building. One was on stamp collecting, another on old glass. We had a Stephen Foster night with music, and one on Memories of Washtenaw County. We visited the Telephone Building and inspected the plant. We were the

guests of the Manchester members at their new high school, where the life of pioneer missionary Frederich Schmid was reviewed. During Michigan week the 4th grade at the Eber White School gave an instructive program on the history and resources of our State. Your president planned all these meetings and programs. She was invited to speak about our Society over the U. of M. radio station, and was a guest at the Univ. T. V. show entitled "Heritage Seeks a Home." We had loaned them some of our pictures of early Ann Arbor and they showed pictures of the stairway leading to our store rooms and their crowded interior and informed their listeners of our urgent need of a home.

Your president was invited to become a member of the State committee on Heritage Day during Michigan Week, and also appeared before the Washtenaw Bar Association in Judge Breakey's Circuit Court to speak on the life of Judge Samuel Dexter.

Perhaps the outstanding accomplishment of the year was the opening of our exhibit in the basement of the new County Building. After nearly two years of persuasion, the Board of Supervisors finally gave us a space 25' x 10'. Though the display is not large, it gives us a n opportunity to inform the public that there is a Washtenaw Historical Society, a fact many people did not know.

We have grown some during the past year. We had 417 members at our last annual meeting and have gained 43 new members. Unfortunately we lost 14 by death and have had 10 withdrawals but we still have had a nice gain. Our present membership is 436. We now have 75 Life Memberships with $ in our Building fund.

In addition to these activities your president has presided at all meetings and held a Board meeting at her home. She has mailed out all of the notices to members every month and has written about 100 letters to prospective members and speakers. Every member who was bereaved received a letter of sympathy and when happiness came your way, a note of congratulation was sent. In short, your president has tried to keep her finger on the pulse of the Society, and to let every one know that his membership is a matter of vital interest to all of us. She has tried to place the Washtenaw Historical Society among the top ranking organizations of this County.

Respectfully submitted,

KATHERINE S. GROOMES,
President

## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Your editor feels that some sort of apology (or at least an explanation) is due because of the fact that a year has gone by since the last issue of Washtenaw Impressions. It has been customary for us to publish only the written papers from which speeches were given before the Society; and also not to publish anything that had already been published elsewhere. This year, however, it so happens

that only one of our speakers came laden with a manuscript, and that a short one. All of them being ready and interesting speakers, full of their subject, they were able to talk "off the cuff"; and all that they had to hand over at the end of the meeting was a little bundle of notes, sometimes quite cryptic, plus, in two cases, an already printed discourse. Some of them consented at the time to reconstruct their remarks in writing, but the busy whirl of their lives has apparently made it impossible, or uninviting, for them to do so.

That our files may give some idea of the importance and unusual variety of our programs during the past year, we are attempting to give here a brief summary of the various talks to which our members have had the opportunity of listening -- with much more rapt attention than our rehash will deserve.

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## SOME ASPECTS OF MICHIGAN POSTAL HISTORY 1787-1854.

Thomas W. Blinn

This short talk will touch on certain aspects of Michigan Postal History during a period of time from 1787 to 1854.

The ORDINANCE of 1787, a legislation that was passed by Congress, contained fourteen sections, the last one setting forth six articles of compact between the original states and the new territory named the North West Territory.

In the fifth article of the last section of this Ordinance it authorized that future states could be formed out of this territory. The portion that bears on the Michigan boundary line reads somewhat in this manner: that if Congress shall hereafter find it expedient they shall have the authority to form one or two states in that part of the said territory which lies north of an East and West line drawn through the southerly bend or extreme of Lake Michigan. Also whenever any said state shall have 60,000 inhabitants therein such state shall be admitted into the Congress of the United States.

Before Michigan could become a state it became necessary to establish this south boundary line, which line became involved in a bloodless war between OHIO and MICHIGAN called the TOLEDO WAR.

Old maps used by Benjamin Franklin placed the south bend of Lake Michigan on a due east and west line that ran out into Lake Erie near the present River Raisin or city of Monroe, but more accurate maps did not show this course to be exactly true. Ohio discovered this to be true before Michigan and changed the line to bring Toledo into Ohio. This brought about the TOLEDO WAR. The final result compelled Michigan to make a reduction of land to both Indiana and Ohio before statehood could be granted.

The writer while engaged in some research work here in Ann Arbor in the Clements Library, found among the manuscripts in the Lucius Lyons files a rather unique and rare letter of the stampless cover period postmarked in handstamp "TOLEDO M.T." and dated Jan. 20, 1835. From the postmark and date this letter was handled by the post-

master of Toledo when the town was in Michigan Territory. According to postal records the only period of time a letter could be postmarked in this fashion would be from Jan. 9, 1835 to Jan. 26, 1837, or a little over two years up to Michigan statehood. There are only three such "covers" known to date.

Another historical cover found among others was in the Harmar files, postmarked in manuscript MARIETTA, and dated Dec. 27, 1789, addressed to "General Harmar, At the Conestoga Waggon, nee Philadelphia, Per Post." The rate of postage was 25 cts.

General Harmar had the authority from War Department to erect wooden stockade forts at certain locations, one of which was built at Marietta, called Fort Harmar. The forts were built to protect the settlers and inhabitants from Indian uprisings common at that time.

In the Canadian Public Archives of Ottawa, Canada, is the earliest cover known bearing a postal marking of Detroit, dated February 14, 1792, with an English postal rate of I-N-8, meaning one shilling and eight pence, mailed from Saginaw district and addressed to Montreal. This letter coincides with the period of occupation by the British forces under the Versailles Treaty of 1783.

Michigan has many Territorial Postal Markings which are shown in manuscript, circular or straight line; among them we find Ann Arbor, M.T.; Ypsilanti, M.T.; Tecumseh, M.T.; Niles, M.T.; Monroe, M.T.; Green Bay, M.T.; and numerous others. These territorial postmarks ran out after Michigan became a state, January 26, 1837.

Let us turn to the postal history of the County of Washtenaw of which Ann Arbor is the county seat.

The Indian name for Grand River in its Chippewa form was Wash-ten-ong, and with the addition of Sebee, "river", meant the river that is far off; i.e. extends far off, far into the interior, it being the longest river in the state. The French, as was customary with them, took the Indian word and translated it into their own language, using the word "Frand River". This river valley had a considerable Indian population at that time and they called that region west of the Detroit district, Wash-ten-ong.

When Governor Cass laid out this new county he called it "Washtenaw", as of September 10, 1822. The other counties established at that time were Lapeer, Lenawee, Saginaw, Sanilac, and Shiawassee.

According to postal records between the year of settlement, 1822, and 1854 43 towns and villages were established with Post Offices in Washtenaw County, out of which only some seven towns are listed at the present date: namely, Ann Arbor, 1825, Dixboro, 1825, Dexter, 1825, Saline, 1827, Manchester, 1834, Salem, 1846, and Whitmore Lake, 1854. The other 36 towns can be classed as ghost towns or non-existent at the present date.

Editor's note: Mr. Blinn followed the reading of this short paper with the display and explanation of his extensive collection of early postal markings in Michigan, before postage stamps came into use, and also of early stamps with their postmarks.

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## WE VISIT THE BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY

One evening in early winter your Society were guests of the Ann Arbor division of the Bell Telephone Company. After a welcome by Mr. Nicholas J. Prakken, local manager, we saw a short motion picture featuring the history and recent developments of telephone service. We then toured the building in small groups led by guides who explained to us the mysteries of the complicated process of placing a telephone call and allowed us to listen in on distant connections. The courteous disembodied voices we were used to hearing became localized for us in the alert, pleasant faces of dozens of young women sitting comfortably at their posts. Awed by the technical elaboration of wires and flashes that make possible the quick dialing process we take for granted, we were brought back to ourselves by a gracious surprise,- the serving of refreshments.

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## STEPHEN FOSTER AND HIS MUSIC

Summary of a Talk by Ransom S. Hawley

Our January meeting featured the life and music of Stephen Foster. Mr. Ransom's opening tribute drew attention to the fact that for over a hundred years Foster's music has been sung by young and old in almost every nation on the globe. He then gave a short review of Foster's early life, education, environment, and family life, his indication of real musical talent at a very early age, his short attempt at a business career, his marriage, his development of spendthrift and drinking habits, and finally his death in Belleview Hospital on January 13, 1864, at the age of thirty-eight years.

Mr. Hawley commented on the conditions prevailing in and around Pittsburg, Foster's home city, during the period from 1826 to 1864.

He analyzed the major influences reflected in Foster's songs as (1) family and home consciousness; (2) a colored servant deeply religious and an ardent Christian; (3) early life in Pittsburg, the crossroads of the West; and (4) the current popularity of minstrel shows. He cited the following specific examples of these influences: (1) "Old Folks at Home"; (2) "hard Times Come Again No More"; (3) "Oh, Suzanna!" and (4) "Ring de Banjo."

Mr. Hawley then spoke at some length of the tributes to Stephen Foster. Josiah Kirby Lilly spent many years and more than a half million dollars in collecting original manuscripts, letters, and

authentic information regarding Foster's life and music; these he deposited in the Foster Memorial at the University of Pittsburg. Mr. Lilly was also personally responsible for having printed and distributed thousands of Foster songbooks and phonograph records of the 200 known songs. It can be said that the continued popularity of Foster's melodies and his recognition as the foremost writer of folk songs is due in large measure to Mr. Lilly's efforts.

Memorials to Foster mentioned by Mr. Hawley are a bronze bust in the Hall of Fame, N.Y.U., 1941; a marble bust in Washington D.C., 1950; the Old Kentucky Home at Bardstown, Kentucky; and the Florida memorial.

The pleasure in Mr. Hawley's talk was heightened by the singing of Foster songs, interspersed at appropriate times, by a group trained and led by Miss Pansy Johnson. At the singing of "Swanee Ribber" Mr. Hawley commented on the location of that river in Florida and the peculiar reason for which that river was chosen for the home of the "old folks" - merely for the sound of its name.

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## G L A S S

Summary of a talk by Ellen Pendorf

In February Mrs. Ellen Pendorf, local antiques dealer and enthusiastic collector of old glass, addressed the Society. Supplying each of her listeners with an elaborate mimeographed outline, she proceeded to follow it step by step, often illustrating her points with examples she had brought from her collection.

Her six main divisions were Glass Making in the Colonies; Pressed Glass - 1825 to the Present; Colored Glass - before 1800 to Victorian ; Victorian-Art Glass (both European and American); Cut, Etched, and Engraved; and Iridescent. In and out of the soberly detailed listing flash such romantic and colorful expressions as "Sandwich lace", "milk glass with colored cosmos," "cranberry," "Burmese soft canary yellow to flesh pink," "fine French paperweights," "Bohemian-ruby and clear," "Mary Gregory: pink faced children," "vasa Murrhina, different colors with gold and silver flakes inside."

Mrs. Pendorf concluded her talk with analysis and discussion of cherished oddities of the glassmaker's art brought on her invitation by members of the Society.

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The March meeting had no formal program. Professor Albert Marckwardt of the Board of Education explained the current needs of the Ann Arbor school system; various business matters were presented; and the rest of the evening was spent in an exchange of reminiscence by the older members.

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The April meeting took place at the Eber White Elementary School, where the pupils presented a display of crafts and a historical program in honor of the stalwart pioneer on whose farm the school was built and whose name it perpetuates.

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## FRIEDRICH SCHMID

### Pioneer Missionary to the Germans in Michigan

T. W. Menzel

On April 24 the Society held its meeting in Manchester, where it was addressed by the Rev. T. W. Menzel, who reviewed material included in a paper which he had read before the Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church on May 19, 1954. The paper was subsequently printed in the official Bulletin of that church.

Mr. Menzel started his paper with the thought that from St. Paul's day on, the currents of missionary activity had followed familiar routes of communication, "simply because missionaries go where the people are." Hence it is not surprising that the first German missionary arrived in Washtenaw via the Atlantic Ocean, the Hudson River, the Erie Canal, Lake Erie, and the Detroit and Huron Rivers; and that his most lasting impression of the three-months journey was the sight of the many Indian canoes on the Detroit River.

Pastor Schmidt conducted the first German service in the Territory of Michigan on Sunday, August 18, 1833, in a carpenter shop in Detroit, and his congregation wept to hear preaching again in their native tongue. That afternoon he held a second service, and on Monday morning he walked four miles into the forest to baptize a number of children. He had made contact with about thirty families, and out of this first visit to Detroit grew St. John's Church.

Loathe as the Detroit Germans were to see him leave after his inspiring week-end visit, his "call" had been to Ann Arbor. So on Tuesday he walked the forty miles up grade, to begin a ministry on foot which took him all over southeastern Michigan; for it was six years before he owned a horse.

The invitation to Washtenaw had come from a fellow Wuerttemberger, Jonathan Henry Mann, who with his own family and two other families they had met on the Erie Canal, had been the first from Germany to choose this county as a home. This was in 1829. The rolling hill country made a strong appeal to these Wuerttembergers, and within the next twenty-five years over 5,000 Swabians were to settle here.

When, by the end of 1832, there were a number of Germans in the Ann Arbor area who expressed the wish for a German pastor, Mr. Mann wrote to a relative, Pastor Josenhaus, of the Basel Mission

Society, asking that a virile young minister be sent to work among them. So Friedrich Schmid became the first of 288 Basel missionaries who were to serve in America in the century to follow.

Schmid finished the five-year course at Basel in April, 1833, at the age of 25. He had previously been trained as a blacksmith.

The Mann family gave the young missionary a hearty welcome; in fact, within a year's time he became one of them by marrying the 17-year-old Louisa Mann, and together they reared twelve children.

Pastor Schmid's first service in his new field was held the Sunday after his arrival in a school house in the forest west of town. A congregation was then organized under the name of the "First German Evangelical Society of Scio." A record of the incorporation of this society was filed in the court of Washtenaw County under the date of December 16, 1834. The name did not include the word "Lutheran."

The first log church, dedicated in the fall of 1833, was built at a cost of $265.32. The total Sunday offerings for the first year amounted to $13.29. The church went under the name of Zion Church and was located where the Bethlehem Cemetery is now found. In 1849 this congregation dedicated a new church building in Ann Arbor village under the name of Bethlehem Church.

During his first years in Ann Arbor, Pastor Schmid went to Detroit every five weeks - on foot. He also developed several congregations in the Monroe area. In 1840 he organized the Bethel Church in Freedom Township; in 1841 a church at Waterloo, and in 1842 the "Thomas Church" in Freedom.

In 1845 he began work among the Indians at Sebewaing, a long cherished ambition. Missionaries sent out from Dresden wrested this Indian work from his hands, however, because he was not considered sufficiently "Lutheran".

In the 1850s Schmid established congregations at Saginaw, Bridgewater, Lansing, Marshall, Chelsea, and Northville, besides laying a foundation for future organizations in Saline, Ypsilanti, Plymouth, Jackson and Genova. He actually organized over twenty congregations, and these in turn gave rise to many other churches.

For some time the salary of this extremely productive missionary was $100 per year,- while the wages of a bricklayer were $1.50 per day. Once he was seriously lost in the forest between Ann Arbor and Detroit, and thereafter he carried a hatchet to blaze a trail. Returning from Monroe one winter night he fell asleep from exhaustion and almost froze to death. After thirty years of such labor his health was broken, though he lived until 1883, almost fifty years to the day after coming to Michigan.

Working in an atmosphers that was often infested with bitter sectarianism, Friedrich Schmid was able to bring Lutheran and Reformed into a living fellowship. In that sense he was "evangelical" to the core, in the basic meaning of that word.

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## OF MILLS AND MILLERS

In June the Annual Pilgrimages took the Society on a tour of old Mill Sites along the Huron River. Each of the members in attendance was presented with a beautiful pictorial map made for the occasion in the offices of Atwell-Hicks, Inc., Civil Engineers and Surveyors.

A highlight of the dinner program was a charming talk by Mrs. Agnes Spokes Harris based on an old diary which has come down in her family. Spokes is an important name in milling annals of Washtenaw, along with Birkett, Deubel, Parsons, and others. Mrs. Harris's grandfather, Amos Spokes, and his son William were skilled stone dressers in the mills of the day and were connected, often as partners, with mills at Dexter, Hudson, Pettysville, Hell, Dover, Saline, Ypsilanti, and Ann Arbor. As a young lad, William used to be sent on horseback to the McPherson Bank in Howell to get and take cash.

### Excerpts from the Log of Amos and Lydia Clarke Spokes.

Presented by their granddaughter, Agnes Spokes Harris.

Amos and Lydia Clarke Spokes and their son, Henry, eight months old, left Floore Mills, Northamptonshire, England, on Wednesday, April 24, 1850, at 11 A.M. Arrived in Liverpool at 9 P.M., they lodged in Great Howard St. after a wearisome journey. On the afternoon of the 25th they went to the dock and looked over the ship. On the morning of the 26th Amos and a friend got the luggage aboard. The men slept on board that night, but the women were not allowed on until seven the next morning. They set sail at noon on the 27th, and passed the coast of Wales in the evening. All were seasick except baby and his mother. They passed Ireland during the night, which Lydia spent most miserably - so frightened and nervous.

April 28 - Sunday - All still seasick. The weather most beautiful. Saw several vessels near us. No service on board - made the sabbath seem dull and lonesome.

April 29 - All our party better. Weather favorable. No vessels in sight all day.

April 30. Fine breeze. All up by 7 and better.

May 1st. Quite a calm. Made but little headway. Sea smooth as a river.

May 2nd. Saw two ships very near. Hoisted colors, which were replied to.

May 3rd. Stiff breeze - Steward's boy fell overboard and was drowned. Wind increasing toward evening. Hard storm all night. All very seasick and frightened.

May 4th. Sea still rough and ship pitching and rolling all day. Amos still sick. Sailing rapidly along.

May 5th. Ten knots an hour. Service below deck.

May 6th. Sailing very rapidly. A man's hat blew overboard.

May 7th. Squally in the morning. Shipped a sea in the cabin. Reached Banks of Newfoundland. Wind shifty and cold

May 8th. Very cold. Baby very sick.

May 9th. A ship on our starboard quarter. A fight in the galley.

May 10th - Stormy night increasing till daylight. Quite a gale. Sick from the rolling and pitching of the ship. Raining. Spoke a ship on our barboard side from Ayr to New York. Head winds. Saw porpoises and birds.

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As the days wore on, head winds turned to calm and fog. "Very cold indeed." When within a day and a half of good sailing from New York, "toward evening there was a heavy sea - the vessel pitching and rolling. All in confusion and impossible to stand. Many boxes dashed down between decks. Passed a miserable night." When land came in sight, off-shore winds, with thunder and lightening, kept the ship from approaching.

Finally, on May 18, the pilot came on board at 4 A.M. On Sunday, - Whitsunday - a beautiful day, they came into Sandy Hook and into New York by noon - the docks crowded with shipping. One of the passengers went on shore and got drunk, and on returning to the ship fell overboard and was drawned.

"May 20 - The ship in confusion. Got our luggage on the steamboat. Walked through New York to the Albany office. Embarked on a steam packet, a most beautiful vessel with 2500 passengers on board. Too many to be accommodated, so we spent a miserable night on deck. Arrived in Albany ½ after 4. Went directly to a friend's for breakfast and to another friend's for dinner. Then to the docks again where we went on board the Palmetto, which was so crowded we were most miserable. Never felt so wretched on the whole journey."

A week's slow progress along the canal amid beautiful woods and awesome scenery brings the Log to a close on May 28th.

Sad to say, the rugged sea voyage and the rigors of the new world seem to have been too much for the baby, for he died two months later, soon after his parents settled in Dexter.

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